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SUBJECT: PERSPECTIVES ON KAZAKHSTAN,S OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP IS  
FOCUS OF DCM SPRATLEN,S VISIT TO VIENNA

Classified By: CDA Carol Fuller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The visit of Embassy Astana DCM Pamela Spratlen to Vienna January 20-22 helped promote useful exchanges of views on Kazakhstan's Chairmanship, facilitated discussion of OSCE engagement in Afghanistan, and provided an opportunity to promote further interaction among Central Asian PermReps. NATO Caucus PermReps agreed that Kazakhstan is focusing more on process than content and that supporters of the Corfu Process will need to work hard to ensure good substantive results. Central Asian PermReps affirmed their support for Kazakhstan's Chairmanship and the work of OSCE field missions but cautioned that the OSCE was "no magic wand" for advancing change in their countries. OSCE Secretary General de Brichambaut urged continued engagement with Kazakhstan at all levels, noted the United States would have to play a leading role in shaping the Chairmanship's agenda, and cast doubt on some participating States' belief that an OSCE Summit in 2010 is inevitable. Kazakhstani PermRep Abdrakhmanov reiterated the Chairmanship's willingness to work with the United States, particularly on Afghanistan. The director of the Conflict Prevention Center shared insights on the delicate relationship between Abdrakhmanov and Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Saudabayev, as well as between Abdrakhmanov and the Kazakhstani ambassador to Austria and the UN Vienna. End summary.

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NATO CAUCUS  
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12. (SBU) At the January 20 meeting of the NATO Caucus, PermReps discussed the priorities of the Kazakhstani Chairmanship, including the proposed Summit and Afghanistan. All lamented that the draft agenda for the Corfu Process is very "event-driven," focusing on process, lacking political direction, and aiming primarily at a Summit, while leaving the substance up to the participating States (pS). The Polish PermRep pointed out a paradox: those who were against the idea of a Summit are now in the paradoxical position of supporting the Corfu Process, which will provide some of the substance. Hungary wondered if the Chairmanship could really "deliver" Russian approval for OSCE involvement inside Afghanistan. All called for closer coordination among NATO allies to focus on our priorities in all three dimensions and ensure there is substance for the interim report in June.

13. (SBU) The Estonian Chair of the NATO Caucus then invited

DCM Spratlen to provide insight on how the Chairmanship is seen by the diplomatic community in Astana and on how Kazakhstan relates to Russia. DCM Spratlen began by stressing how important the OSCE Chairmanship is to Kazakhstan. Everyone in Kazakhstan now knows about the OSCE and expects the Chairmanship to bring honor and prestige to the country; any OSCE events within the country will "resonate" with the population and have an impact. DCP Spratlen urged NATO allies to help shape the substance of the Kazakhstani agenda, seeking opportunities to influence the way Kazakhstan approaches its work, through cooperation, coordination, and dialogue. Kazakhstan has enormous self-confidence and therefore does not always "hear" us -- the 56 pS will need appropriate repetition of key messages we want Kazakhstan to hear. She noted that Kazakhstan pursues a balanced foreign policy, and although most in the government still see Russia as Kazakhstan's most important partner, they treasure their sovereignty and pursue independent priorities. NATO allies have an opportunity to help shape the year for Kazakhstan, to help it as a state and to help make the OSCE a success.

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OSCE IS POSITIVE, BUT IT'S NO MAGIC WAND  
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14. (SBU) Central Asian PermReps on January 21 welcomed the new focus on Central Asia that has accompanied Kazakhstan's Chairmanship and praised the work of OSCE field missions. Most of them also voiced their support for Kazakhstan's announced priorities as Chair. Turkmen PermRep Aydogdyev said his government was interested in seeking common ground

with Central Asian neighbors. He praised the OSCE Center in Ashgabat but indicated there was a limit to what the OSCE could do, arguing, for example, that there was "no need" for OSCE involvement in law enforcement activities, as Central Asian states already enjoyed good cooperation on such matters. Several questioned the OSCE's emphasis on human dimension issues, contending that it duplicated the work of the UN's Human Rights Council. The Turkem PermRep, seconded by others, cautioned that their cultures need to change slowly, and pushing too hard, too fast is counterproductive. The Tajik and Turkmen PermReps and the Uzbek Charge complained that they are small

missions and have difficulty following all of the issues, and USOSCE Charge pledged that USOSCE would try to stay in closer touch with them.

15. (SBU) The Kyrgyz and Tajik PermReps praised the OSCE's overall role but joined their colleagues in highlighting the difficulty of cooperating on certain issues, including Afghanistan. All said it frequently was difficult to obtain visas for Afghan officials, and several identified logistical hurdles as key obstacles to including Afghans in OSCE training in their countries. There was no reaction when the Kazakh DCM announced that they had designated as the Chairmanship's liaison for OSCE coordination a senior official in the Kazakhstani embassy in Kabul.

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SG URGES CONTINUED, COORDINATED ENGAGEMENT  
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16. (SBU) Noting that his priority was to defend the "integrity and respectability" of the OSCE, Secretary General de Brichambaut emphasized January 22 that continued engagement with Kazakhstan in Vienna and capitals was critical to ensuring the OSCE continued to work "in the right way" during the Kazakhstani Chairmanship. De Brichambaut urged the United States and the EU to coordinate their expectations of the Corfu Process, identify "decent outcomes" (particularly for the June interim report), and deliver a unified message at all levels. Lamenting the EU's "lack of direction," de Brichambaut said the United States would have to lead the Corfu Process -- and potentially could be left as the only pS to try to impose conditions on Kazakhstan's desire for a Summit. De Brichambaut suggested that a Summit

might not be inevitable, but that Vienna might be a desirable location for such a meeting, particularly if it turned out to be little more than a "jubilee exercise" -- a phrase introduced by the Russian PermRep during the last Corfu Process meeting.

17. (SBU) Turning to day-to-day management issues, de Brichambaut said he spoke "three times a day" to Kazakhstani PermRep Abdrakhmanov, frequently on purely logistical matters, and added that he expected an "authoritarian streak" to show itself (he noted that Chairmanships often suffer from a "master of the universe" syndrome). De Brichambaut further observed that the cycle of consultations and the pressure of building consensus likely would start to wear relatively quickly on the Kazakhstani delegation and recommended that interlocutors be "discreet" and avoid surprises, particularly given Abdrakhmanov's preoccupation with "face" and image. On one final note, de Brichambaut said the Chairmanship was reluctant to reconsider its draft human dimension agenda, despite significant pressure from the United States and the EU, as Abdrakhmanov believed doing so would open a "Pandora's box" of conflicting demands. De Brichambaut declined the Chairmanship's request to get involved, saying he had "no mandate" for such issues.

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KAZAKHSTAN'S ROLE ON AFGHANISTAN  
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18. (SBU) In a subsequent meeting January 22, Kazakhstani PermRep Abdrakhmanov answered a question about Russian PermRep Azimov's hints of a possible change in Russia's long-standing opposition to OSCE activities inside Afghanistan by saying his government was unaware of any such change. Abdrakhmanov said that while the Chairmanship wanted

to find a niche for the OSCE vis-a-vis Afghanistan, it remained concerned about the security situation and participating States' continuing reservations about work inside the country. He added that Kazakhstan was "not too influential" in this matter and suggested that much would depend on the January 28 London conference and on ongoing U.S.-Russia and EU-Russia dialogues. Abdrakhmanov did confirm, however, that the Chairmanship had identified Second Secretary Dauren Tishtykbayev at Kazakhstan's embassy in Kabul as a liaison officer for OSCE issues.

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LIFE IS NOT EASY FOR THE KAZAKHSTANI PERM REP  
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19. (C) Asked about his perceptions of the Kazakhstani Chairmanship, OSCE Conflict Prevention Center Director Herbert Salber (Germany) observed that there is no high expectation of Abdrakhmanov's ability to manage OSCE issues. In fact, he asserted, the GOK had considered replacing Abdrakhmanov prior to assuming the Chairmanship, and bilateral Ambassador Yerzhan Kazyhanov (who also serves as PermRep for the UN) might be to a certain extent keeping an eye on his compatriot. (Note: Salber is privy to some direct information due to the secondment of a German national, Dieter Boden, as policy adviser to the GOK in Astana.) Kazyhanov had been a personal aid to the president, was once head of international relations for the GOK, and remains close to Saudabayev. In contrast, Abdrakhmanov tries to stay out of Saudabayev's proximity and even refused to take the seat next to him in the car when he arrived in Vienna for the inaugural festivities held January 14. Salber also recounted "dueling events" January 13. Shortly after Abdrakhmanov issued invitations for a gala concert at 6:30, Kazyhanov issued an invitation to a presentation of President Nazarbayev's book "The Kazakhstan Way": same time, same place; the concert had to be delayed.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) Interlocutors' recommendations for dealing with the Kazakhstanis -- from "discreetly" delivering messages to providing ways for the Kazakhstani delegation to "save face" when making difficult decisions -- suggest we have a range of tools at our disposal for shaping the Chairmanship. Coordination among NATO allies, both in Vienna and Brussels, is essential for helping counterbalance Russian pressure on Kazakhstan and ensuring our messages are heard. Our continued cooperation with Embassy Astana and with other Missions in Central Asia will be key, particularly as we seek to expand OSCE engagement with Afghanistan and promote further interaction among Central Asian states. DCM Spratlen's visit proved valuable from many perspectives and showed that occasional visits by U.S. officials to Vienna can help promote our objectives. USOSCE urges Washington and Brussels officials to make similar visits, especially during the Corfu Process discussions that will contribute to the June interim report.  
FULLER